



# ***The Competitor's Edge***

## **Visual Handicapping Scouting Report**

by  
**Kerry M. Thomas**





# THE COMPETITOR'S EDGE VISUAL HANDICAPPING SCOUTING REPORT

*A Psychological X-Factor Approach to Race-Day Performance*

---

## THE HERD DYNAMIC COMPETITIVE HIERARCHY

*Mother Nature's Competitive Order — Interpreted for the Modern Race*

In every race, beneath the raw speed and flashy past performances, lies an invisible structure—a psychological order shaped not by numbers, but by instinct, emotion, and presence. This is the **Herd Dynamic Competitive Hierarchy** (HDCH): a behavioral map that mirrors the way horses naturally sort themselves within the social fabric of the herd, especially in the high-stakes world of bachelor herd interaction. *This is a look through nature's lens, held by human hands...*

Just as young colts in the wild form temporary bachelor groups to test one another—sparring, posturing, establishing pecking order—the modern racetrack becomes a psychological proving ground. These racehorses are not just running a distance; they're sorting themselves into a dynamic herd and social structure. *Who absorbs pressure? Who imposes it? Who hesitates when the moment demands conviction?*

The HDCH reflects these roles.

- This hierarchy is not built on finish times or form cycles—it emerges from how each horse handles emotional stress, how clearly they interpret their environment, and how efficiently they express intent in a shifting, competitive herd scenario. In short, it reveals which horses are **mentally built to lead**, which must adapt to survive, and which are **exposed when the emotional current surges**.

### What I Measure:

- **Sensory Soundness™**: A horse's ability to interpret and respond to sensory input in real-time without distortion or delay.
- **Stress Tolerance**: Emotional resiliency under pressure—who withers, who waits, who rises.
- **Herd Dynamic Expression**: The balance (or imbalance) of Group Herd Dynamic (GHD) and Individual Herd Dynamic (IHD) tendencies—how they interact with others and the environment.
- **Behavioral Adaptability**: The ability to shift gears emotionally when the race conditions change.

## The Belmont as a Bachelor Herd Battle

In a bachelor herd, dominance isn't just about who's fastest—it's about **emotional assertion, psychological timing, and herd influence**. Not all herd members want to lead, but the ones who do must earn that space through emotional conviction. The hierarchy is fluid in form but structured in nature. One horse may be physically ahead, but psychologically following. Another may be behind—but dictating tempo through presence alone.

This same dynamic plays out on the racetrack. The HDCH ranks horses not simply by “who's better,” but by **who can control the moment when the moment matters most**. In the chaos of pace changes, herd compression, and jockey decisions, it's the horse with emotional clarity that rises—not always the one the toteboard expects.

---

## Why It Matters

If you understand the **operating system running the machine**, you don't just know what a horse can do—you know *how* and *when* they're most likely to do it. The HDCH gives you that edge. It helps you spot:

- **Stable minds hidden at long odds**
  - **Vulnerable favorites ripe for emotional unraveling**
  - **Pace disruptors who can inject chaos and tilt the flow**
  - **Herd influencers who shape the structure from gate to wire**
- 

## 🏆 Projected Hierarchical Order of Success

*This is our psychological finish projection, based purely on mental performance capacity—not raw speed. Use this to build value bets, spot vulnerable favorites, or isolate emotionally stable runners for exotics.*

1. Sovereignty 🏰💎
2. Journalism 🏰💎
3. Baeza 💎🌊⚠️
4. Crudo 🌊💎
5. Rodriguez 🧑🔴
6. Uncaged 🔴🔴
7. Hill Road 🔴🔴
8. Heart Of Honor 🔴🔴

## ▲🚩 Disruption Watch

*These horses may not project near the top but carry emotional wildcards that can change race shape or inject chaos into herd flow. Consider for value plays, pace disruption, or underneath in exotics.*

- **Rodriguez** – Could front-run with powerful force if left alone early; but vulnerable if engaged in early battle.
  - **Hill Road** – If blinkers come off and rhythm syncs, he could surprise with stretch-lane explosiveness.
- 

## 🧬 Herd Dynamic Tiers

### 👑 Tier 1: The Influencers

*Set the herd tone. Visible early, mentally present late. Prime Win & Key Exotic Candidates*

- Sovereignty
  - Journalism
- 

### 🧑 Tier 2: The Adaptors

*Emotionally stable responders. Best positioned when the flow suits them. Exotics / Exacta-Box Smart Plays*

- Baeza
  - Crudo
- 

### 🧑 Tier 3: The Followers

*Rely on structure and rhythm from others. Possible board-hitters with the right setup, but not foundation types.*

- Rodriguez
  - Uncaged
- 

### 🧑 Tier 4: The Exposed

*Stress-sensitive or mentally inefficient under dynamic pressure. Fade Potential — or Chaos Value for exotics*

- Hill Road
- Heart Of Honor

## How to Use It

Use the HDCH alongside your traditional handicapping tools as a behavioral overlay:

- **Tier 1 horses** are herd influencers—mentally assertive, emotionally present, and tactically dangerous.
- **Tier 2 horses** are adaptive responders—balanced and opportunistic, thriving when conditions suit them.
- **Tier 3 horses** need help—they follow rhythm, not create it. They're passengers more than pilots.
- **Tier 4 horses** are exposed under pressure—emotionally sensitive or situationally limited.

Sprinkle in **Disruption Watch** horses—colts who may not win, but who can emotionally disturb the race's rhythm and open the door for a sleeper to rise.

---

## In Nature. On Paper. In the Gate.

The Herd Dynamic Competitive Hierarchy reveals what speed figures alone cannot. It speaks to *psychological class*—a truth that doesn't always match the betting public's perception. It is the invisible story unfolding inside the visible one.

This is how bachelor herds sort themselves.

This is how real racehorses do, too especially at classic distances.



# SOVEREIGNTY

Trainer: William Mott

Sire/Dam: Into Mischief o/o Crowned

## 🧠 Between The Ears

Sovereignty continues to affirm what we saw glimpses of early on—he is emotionally sophisticated and doesn't give away excess energy, either physically or psychologically. There's a calm intelligence in how he reads his environment, matched by an ability to distribute effort with strategic patience. He doesn't seek dominance through aggression, but rather allows the environment and herd energy to shape around him until he can assert himself with minimal waste. This lends his performance a graceful assertiveness—he's more statesman than soldier.

In the **Kentucky Derby**, Sovereignty displayed tremendous tactical poise. From the 18 post on a sloppy track, he handled early compression with maturity, absorbing the crowding pressure and letting the race shape itself around him. That slight squeeze-back at the break was a blessing in disguise—positioned behind Journalism, he used his GHD strength to mentally coast and let others do the early crowd-cutting. What followed was a beautiful IHD surge at precisely the right time. There was a moment mid-stretch where Sovereignty's energy seemed to hang—he met Journalism's emotional wall and took a stride or two to assess it. But instead of wilting, he regrouped, drew upon reserves stored early, and cut the emotional tie. That subtle but telling psychological moment won him the race.

Sovereignty's quiet control and measured rhythm make him a dangerous Belmont competitor, especially at **Saratoga's 1¼ mile** configuration where his Derby-style tactical placement may once again play in his favor. He has matured even since April—not just as a runner, but as a psychological tactician, and skipping the Preakness has surely given him a physical spell to his benefit.

## ✅ Strengths:

- Displays intelligent emotional energy distribution with excellent rhythm preservation under pressure.
- Strong GHD integrity allows for tactical positioning and mental cruising even in crowded herd scenarios.
- Mature transition capability into IHD surge mode when timing aligns with emotional availability.

## ✅⚠️ Vulnerabilities:

- Slight emotional drag when engaging higher-level HD horses head-on—requires a beat to recalibrate.
- If forced into an early IHD contest, his stride can compress and rhythm stall.
- Still susceptible to heavy footing or sudden traffic shifts mid-race.

### **Ride Style Tip:**

A patient, rhythm-respecting ride is non-negotiable. He thrives when asked to gradually build intensity from a secure emotional base. Let the field shape around him—don't ask him to shape the field too early.

---

### **Best Asset:**

Sovereignty governs space without needing to dominate it. His ability to quietly track, mentally draft, and launch when the moment is right is a testament to emotional timing and herd situational awareness.

---

### **Achilles Heel:**

- Shrinking emotional cushion when pressured too early or too often.
  - Risk of self-imposed sensory delays when transition zones appear before he's ready.
  - Emotional energy can lag slightly behind physical availability when fatigued.
- 

### **Watch Factor:**

Watch for the moment he engages the lead horse. If he momentarily stalls or seems hesitant, it's not physical—it's his IHD interpreting energy. If he clears cleanly and opens stride again, he's in sync. If head lifts or energy goes vertical, (an up-and-down rhythm more than front to back propulsion), he's out of rhythm and in emotional defense mode.

---

### **Race Condition Flag:**

Traffic-sensitive early. Needs clear paths and open cadence zones to do his best work—inside boxes or stop-start paces diminish his flow.

---

### **Performance Projection:**

 Strong Contender

---

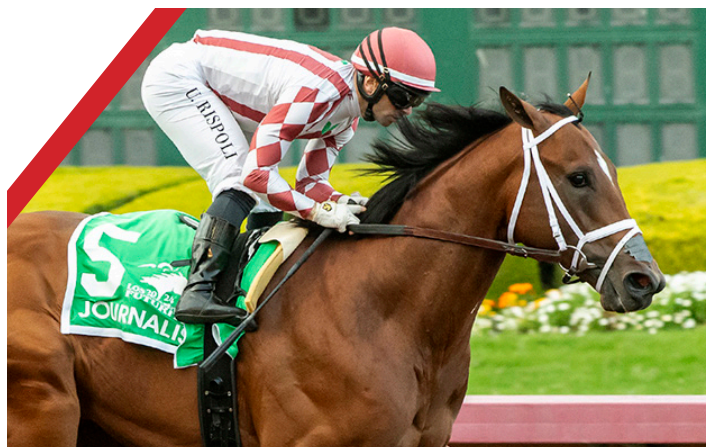
### **Kerry's Note:**

This is a horse who's not just good—he's intelligent about how he goes about his work. What makes Sovereignty dangerous is not only what he does, but when he chooses to do it. He used Journalism's energy like a wedge in the Derby, waited for the emotional fatigue to create space, and then surged. In a Saratoga Belmont where the spacing will likely mimic the Derby more than the traditional 1½ mile affair, Sovereignty's style is tailor-made for another ambush finish.

---

### **Intuition Call:**

He's getting sharper—not just in conditioning, but in his sense of timing. If the pace is reasonable and the field gives him even an inch of emotional space mid-race, he could once again be rolling past them in the final 200 yards, just when everyone else is beginning to labor. Feels like a colt still learning to sharpen his sword—and he may slice through this one too.



# JOURNALISM

Trained: Michael McCarthy

Sire/Dam: Curlin o/o Mopotism

## 🧠 Between The Ears

Journalism has now graduated—not from a prep series or a graded stakes schedule, but from his own psychological apprenticeship. His performances in the Kentucky Derby and Preakness weren't just races; they were rites of passage in the life of a competitive herd animal. He's no longer the emotionally efficient colt with untapped gears—he's a proven warrior whose internal operating system now runs with elite-level intention and execution.

In the Kentucky Derby, Journalism jumped from Gate 8 into pure situational chaos. The track was sloppy and the herd energy disjointed, but Journalism didn't panic—he processed. His well-developed GHD showed itself immediately, acting like an emotional buffer zone while others scrambled. He “let the kids rush off,” using a tactical delay to allow the environment to unfold before choosing his moment to engage. As mud flew and pressure mounted, he transitioned into IHD combat mode, grinding forward with a gritty tenacity, even carving room for Sovereignty as they each emotionally surged. Though he was overtaken late, this wasn't a loss—it was a coming-of-age. He gave everything he had and left the stretch with no psychological debt, only growth.

In the Preakness, Journalism entered the gate sharper, louder—a warrior humming with anticipation. His chatter was emotional charge, not disarray. Once released, he found himself the unwilling middle in a physical sandwich, but again, his GHD served him well. Rather than react blindly, he calculated. A stiffening of the tail showed annoyance, but his posture showed control. He backed off, reset, and hunted for space with predatory poise.

Then came the turn. Denied access but unwilling to yield, Journalism shifted. No longer asking politely, he became the psychological equivalent of a dominant bachelor colt breaking through with brute emotional authority. We must remember that by the laws of nature, regardless of the optics from our perspective, bachelor herd combat is a contact sport. Dismissing Sandman's effort to shake hands, Journalism locked in on Gosger like a heat-seeking missile, and executed one of the most emotionally powerful surges I have seen. This wasn't just a win—it was a statement. And that statement was: “I'm here. I know who I am. And I won't be denied.”

Heading into the Belmont, Journalism will face off against two Derby-tested but well-rested rivals—Sovereignty and Baeza. While physical reserves may be in question, the emotional maturity and tactical awareness this colt now carries makes him a formidable presence. His story isn't complete—but it's already the stuff of legend.

## ✅ Strengths

- Fully matured GHD offers emotional clarity and elite tactical awareness under pressure.
- High-functioning IHD drive with escalating momentum and competitive resolve.
- Emotional resilience—recovers quickly from physical and psychological stress.



## ✔ Vulnerabilities

- Back-to-back emotionally taxing races may impact physical freshness and energy reserves.
  - When boxed in or denied rhythm early, emotional pressure may spike, leading to moments of inefficient motion.
- 

## 🕒 Ride Style Tip

Allow him to dictate emotional timing—don't force the issue early. Journalism needs a ride that respects the rhythm and trusts the process.

---

## 💎 Best Asset

Emotional efficiency paired with fierce competitive grit—he balances patience and fire with instinctive precision.

---

## 🐾 Achilles Heel

Early disruption to rhythm and spacing may cause frustration to bubble up, which can lead to emotional leakage and late-race combat fatigue.

---

## 👁 Watch Factor

Monitor his gate behavior and first-turn rhythm. If his movement light and fluid, his ears are working in sync, he's tuned in. Tail stiffening is a sign of agitation and may indicate emotional friction needing an outlet.

---

## 🏇 Race Condition Flag

The smaller field at Saratoga plays to bachelor herd strengths. We must remember that in nature, a bachelor herd is not a large number of horses, but a small number. Regardless of the physical number of in a field, the horses only compete against one or two peers at a time which fragments the field size in herd terms anyway. The "race" is no less a battle for any one horse whether with 5 or 15 field companions. Though post position matters less in smaller fields environmentally, any early traffic chaos could yet test his reserves after the last two grueling races.

---

## 🎯 Performance Projection

🎯 Win Potential

🎯 Battle-Tested, Emotionally Elite

---

## 📝 Kerry's Note

He's not the same horse that walked into the Derby gates. Journalism has become a hardened competitor whose emotional courage is now fully matched by tactical maturity. Whether he wins the Belmont or not, this colt is no longer learning—he's leading.

---

## 🧠 Intuition Call

Journalism doesn't just want the fight—he needs it. And that's where his power lives. He's found his emotional identity in the furnace of high-stakes competition, and if given even the slimmest window at Saratoga, he won't ask twice. He'll take it. The emotional fire is lit—and if he's not spent, he may well bask in the glow.



# BAEZA

*Trainer: John Shirreffs*

*Sire/Dam: McKinzie o/o Puca*

## 🧠 Between The Ears

Baeza brings a compelling mix of inner grit and outward polish — a colt who wants to lead from the front, not just in body but in spirit. From early on, he's shown that pull toward Individual Herd Dynamic (IHD) dominance, tempered by the emotional caution of his Group Herd Dynamic (GHD). There's a tension in his psychology that, when harnessed correctly, actually becomes a creative force — like a violin string tuned just right. He has an instinct to engage, to seek the forward space, but not without measuring it first. That internal measure, once a source of hesitation, is now becoming a tool for precision.

In the **Kentucky Derby**, we witnessed Baeza take a deliberate step forward along his mental maturity curve. Facing the chaos of a 20-horse field from the extreme outside post, he didn't react with panic or over-correction — he processed. The early balance he showed between his emotional urgency and his need for herd contextualization was masterful. His GHD buffered the intensity of the moment just enough for his IHD to stay sharp without becoming erratic. Watching him subtly slide into a mid-pack rhythm, clearing his own mental workspace like a chess player clearing the board before the opening move, was as fluid as it was intentional. He was not part of the herd stampede—he was studying it.

What's especially noteworthy in Baeza is his evolving ability to delay gratification. In earlier efforts, he showed signs of wanting to do too much, too soon — an emotional firmness where mental signals outran physical timing. But in the Derby, he held his ground. He allowed space to open, let the leaders plow the road, and then adjusted course with clarity rather than confusion. His late stretch movement was as much psychological as it was physical: a horse erupting not just with stored energy, but with stored decision-making. That's the mark of a developing athlete who is starting to understand not just the race around him, but the race within him.

Baeza is no longer a horse figuring out how to belong. He is a horse beginning to define where he fits, and why. And with each stride forward in these high-pressure environments, he's shrinking the gap between "raw ability" and "applied intelligence." For those who know how to read the mind behind the motion, there's potential for something special be forming here — the operating system may well be starting to write its own code.

## 👉 Strengths:

- Honest competitor with a genuine will to engage head-to-head.
- Possesses an IHD-centric emotional drive with mid-distance rhythm.
- Effective energy conservation when in mental rhythm.

### **Vulnerabilities:**

- Interpretation ratio can falter under extended, hi-intensity sensory input demands.
  - Competitive duration suffers when mental processing is rushed or forced.
- 

### **Ride Style Tip:**

Ride the horse, not the race. Baeza thrives when allowed to calibrate naturally and step into rhythm—conserve early, ignite late. Let him find space before asking for pace.

---

### **Best Asset:**

His “gamer” mentality and growing psychological maturity—Baeza wants to compete, and he’s learning how to do it on his terms without emotional waste.

---

### **Achilles Heel:**

- Susceptible to rushed decision-making under combat pressure from peers or jockey.
  - Vulnerable to late-stretch hesitation during fast sensory transitions.
- 

### **Watch Factor:**

If Baeza breaks clean and finds an immediate cruising rhythm, that’s his green light. Watch for sensory lead change fluency on the far turn—if it’s seamless, he’s coming. If his stride shortens or he gets “stuck” in herd traffic, mind-to-body fluency may become a little “sticky”.

---

### ▶ **Race Condition Flag:**

Traffic-sensitive—needs flow, not friction. The more rhythm, the more dangerous he becomes.

---

### **Performance Projection:**

💡 Overlay Potential | 💡 🦵 Vulnerable Favorite

---

### **Kerry’s Note:**

The psychological step forward Baeza took in the Derby should not be underestimated. This is a colt growing into himself, with the ability to win this race if the environment allows him to stay in sync. I’m watching closely his ongoing growth patterns—especially keen to see if he can separate from peer competitor’s without hesitation. There’s something clicking between the ears.

---

### **Intuition Call:**

Feels like a horse on the cusp of his breakout moment—especially if herd dynamics shift early and he’s allowed to draft in peace. If the chaos comes late, he could sweep wide and surprise. But if it comes early and surrounds him, the window may close before he can fully optimize his forward gear.



# RODRIGUEZ

*Trainer: Bob Baffert*

*Sire/Dam: Authentic o/o Cayala*

## 🧠 Between The Ears

Rodriguez is the embodiment of raw, forward-pressing instinct. He doesn't contemplate his moves—he reacts with a kind of emotional immediacy that blurs the line between sensory input and physical output. His IHD is fast-cycling, and in the right conditions, he's a force of nature, overpowering with sheer velocity. He's not wired to wait—his mind doesn't build pressure gradually; it discharges it like a spring.

What makes Rodriguez so compelling is also what makes him fragile—he thrives in chaos he controls, but falters when he must defer, wait, or yield. His herd dynamics suggest a lightly formed GHD, which places him as more of an emotional soloist than a social strategist. He doesn't absorb cues from the herd well, which can leave him isolated psychologically even within a packed group.

With the **Belmont's smaller field at Saratoga**, Rodriguez may find himself far more comfortable than he would have been in the 20-horse Derby chaos. Less traffic means less psychological noise, and that could be just the opening he needs. The reduced herd energy may lower the need for sustained GHD buffering and allow him to reach peak IHD efficiency earlier in the race. Still, if the smaller group includes pace rivals or tactical disruptors, Rodriguez's emotional throttle could still burn too hot, too soon. He's electric when free—but flickers fast when pressed.

## ✅ Strengths:

- Naturally assertive with explosive gate acceleration and IHD-forward momentum.
- Strong sensory clarity when unchallenged—can sense rearward threats and respond fluidly when in rhythm.
- Creates his own space through force of motion and environmental projection.

## ✅ Vulnerabilities:

- Pushes past his own psychological buffer—can trigger early emotional fatigue and rhythmic breakdown.
- Chase-mode override: prone to emotional reactivity rather than strategic pacing, especially under external pressure.



### **Ride Style Tip:**

Timing over push. Tactically manage his energy without strangling it—guide him into rhythm, then ride the wave. Don't try to control the flame; shape the burn.

---

### **Best Asset:**

When emotionally centered and balanced, Rodriguez becomes an intuitive athlete—his stride becomes elastic, his awareness heightens, and his forward motion sharpens into efficient aggression.

---

### **Achilles Heel:**

- Chase-mode mentality wastes valuable energy when he runs “with” peers instead of “past” them.
  - Emotionally reactive, not proactive—can't forecast pressure and often loses efficiency during transitions.
- 

### **Watch Factor:**

Watch how he handles the first internal decision point—usually just past the first turn. If he settles into a fluid rhythm, he's in sync. If his stride lifts and his expression intensifies, he's fighting against the emotional pace and likely draining his tank early.

---

### **Race Condition Flag:**

While not footing-dependent, Rodriguez is pace- and space-sensitive. Smaller fields work to his advantage but inside positioning or early pace pressure could still set emotional traps.

---

### **Performance Projection:**

🌟 Solid Board Contender

🎯 Potential Upset

---

### **Kerry's Note:**

Rodriguez didn't run in the Derby, and that may work in his favor—he's physically fresh and emotionally unbruised. This Saratoga edition of the Belmont plays to his strengths: reduced field noise, more room to find space early, and fewer psychological hurdles to navigate. If his Jockey reads the room as well as Rodriguez reads open air, this colt could finally get to show his true emotional stride without interference.

---

### **Intuition Call:**

Rodriguez is the kind of colt who either flies or fizzles depending entirely on whether the environment lets him feel like he's in control. He doesn't need the lead—he needs his lane. If he finds it, and the pace isn't suicidal, he could win wire to wire or stalk-and-pounce with shocking force. But if early jostling forces him to switch gears before he's ready, he may be done by the top of the stretch.



# CRUDO

*Trainer: Todd Pletcher*

*Sire/Dam: Justify o/o Blossomed*

## 🧠 Between The Ears

Crudo is the kind of horse that can fool you with his polish. On the outside, he moves like a finished product—light on his feet, fluent through his body, efficient in space. But what glitters is not always seasoned. Beneath the surface lies a raw, powerful engine that has yet to be truly tested under emotional duress. His natural rhythm runs hot, his mental cycle fast, and he approaches performance with a “go first, ask questions later” mentality. This instinctive drive places him in IHD combat mode right out of the gate—an impressive trait, but also a dangerous one if left untethered.

What’s striking is how much emotional space he creates for himself. His sensory sweep is wide and decisive, allowing him to claim territory without needing to fight for it. But therein lies the concern: he hasn’t been asked to fight. In his limited career, Crudo has led the orchestra, set the tempo, and danced unbothered in wide-open lanes. That’s not a knock—it’s a reflection of his untapped potential. Still, questions linger about how he’ll react when the music changes and someone else takes the baton. Does he have the herd dynamic grit to respond when the walls close in?

Crudo’s psychology is built for front-running, but his best use may come from a just-off-the-pace, “cat ready to pounce” cruise. He has the rare ability to feel the world behind him without it pulling on his forward motion—a form of rear-space sensory awareness that is more often a vulnerability than a strength. If he learns to channel this inner tension into a long-range IHD launch, we could be looking at a serious force. But without competition-forged discipline, his greatest strength could slip into emotional overexertion. He’s not quite a finished blade yet—but when sharpened, he’ll cut deep.

## ✅ Strengths:

- Exceptional mind-to-body fluency with minimal emotional drag.
- High sensory space clearance and rear pressure awareness.
- Natural long-range IHD rhythm and competitive duration capacity.

## ✅ Vulnerabilities:

- Limited exposure to true peer-level pressure; psychological depth remains unproven.
- Tendency to “run” rather than “race”—competes with environment, not yet with herd.
- May overextend emotionally if not anchored by strategic restraint.

### **Ride Style Tip:**

Patience over pace—ride just off the lead in a cruise control rhythm and time the emotional pounce. Avoid “send and hope” tactics; conserve energy for the slingshot.

---

### **Best Asset:**

Crudo's Independent Nature—he doesn't require a peer to validate his focus, allowing him to create and command emotional space on his own terms.

---

### **Achilles Heel:**

- If he's drawn into an early pace duel, his unpolished herd dynamic could unravel.
  - Mental narrowness may lead to vulnerability if approached from multiple angles late.
  - Lack of battle seasoning may cause delay in response when it's time to “fight back.”
- 

### **Watch Factor:**

If Crudo is allowed to settle into a rhythm just off the lead, observe how he holds his ears—they will often signal whether he's mentally synced or scattered. A forward tilt with active tracking bodes well, while twitchy, unfocused ear motion late suggests a “searching” sense, “feeling the walls in the dark for the light switch...” which could mean mental fatigue is creeping in.

---

### **Race Condition Flag:**

Needs a “lane to learn”—traffic-sensitive and still developing competitive angles; wide trip with tactical spacing is ideal.

---

### **Performance Projection:**

Win Potential

---

### **Kerry's Note:**

Crudo is the type of horse who could pull off the kind of performance that makes people say, “Where did that versatility come from?” But the truth is, it was always in there—it just hadn't been drawn out. This race will give us the clearest picture yet of who he is emotionally. If he gets boxed in, we'll see his herd dynamic cracks if they exist. If he finds a lane and is asked at the right moment to emerge from the chaos, we may see him bloom in real time.

---

### **Intuition Call:**

Crudo feels like a colt still discovering who he is—not unlike a young boxer sparring for the first time with a true champion. If the pace is manageable and the mental space around him stays clean, he could float into the picture with style and strength. But if the race turns into a psychological dogfight down the lane, he may not yet know how to throw back or whom to target. Either way, this will be the moment we find out if he's flash—or fire.



# UNCAGED

*Trainer: Todd Pletcher*

*Sire/Dam: Curlin o/o Dark Nile*

## 🧠 Between The Ears

There's a quiet, brooding complexity inside Uncaged that reveals itself not through erratic behavior, but through emotional drag. He's not outwardly anxious or hyper-reactive—he simply carries a weight with him, as though his thoughts get caught in transit from head to hoof. The colt appears emotionally overloaded by internal indecision, caught somewhere between ambition and hesitancy. It's not that he doesn't want to compete—it's that his internal systems don't always align on when and how. The result is a horse that feels like he's laboring not physically, but mentally, as if too many thoughts are trying to be expressed through one narrow lane of output.

What Uncaged lacks in raw fluidity, he can make up for in choreographed rhythm—when given the time and environment to settle into himself. He needs focus lent to him from the outside; his performance improves dramatically when tethered to a clear emotional leader on the track. He has a long-range competitive gear, but it can't be summoned early or on demand—it must be built, layered, and slingshot into with precise timing. He's not the horse you "send," he's the horse you "shape." And if the environment allows for it, he can run his race in three distinct movements: calm, collect, compete.

There's something about him that suggests he is more of a tool than a weapon. He can cut through space, but only if used correctly. Ask him to lead the charge too soon, and he may wander. Let him follow a strong road-paver, and he might surprise you with a rally that feels as if it came from nowhere—but was, in fact, always waiting inside him.

## ✅ Strengths:

- Capable of long-range IHD momentum when allowed to build in stages.
- Emotionally responsive to external guidance and clarity of purpose.
- Environmentally neutral with no sensory red flags.

## ✅⚠️ Vulnerabilities:

- Emotional leakage between thought and action leads to energy inefficiency.
- Lacks competitive adaptability—struggles to make mid-race adjustments under pressure.
- Psychological growth pattern appears static; may have limited ceiling at top-level.



### **Ride Style Tip:**

Strategic patience is essential. Let the early part of the race settle him emotionally before targeting a horse to draft behind. A thoughtful hand must choreograph, not command. He needs to execute 3 different stages to be fully competitive; settle with patience, dial up and in slowly, slingshot out with the built-up emotional momentum.

---

### **Best Asset:**

His ability to “sling shot” off a set rhythm—when properly built—gives him a unique attacking angle in the final stages of a race.

---

### **Achilles Heel:**

- Requires a game plan—cannot freelance in high-pressure, fast-changing herd environments.
  - If isolated or pressured too early, emotional drift is likely to cause collapse in effort focus.
- 

### **Watch Factor:**

Watch where he positions early—if he’s floating mentally and doesn’t secure a target, it could unravel late. But if he settles early, slides up behind a peer and stays relaxed through the backstretch, that’s a cue he’s syncing emotionally and preparing for a late-stage launch.

---

### **Race Condition Flag:**

Needs room and rhythm; too much early competitive pressure or a congested early IHD battleground could short-circuit his build-up. Prefers clear air and small peer radius.

---

### **Performance Projection:**

 Overlay Potential

---

### **Kerry’s Note:**

Uncaged is one of those horses whose performance is as much a reflection of the jockey’s instincts as it is of his own ability. If the rider can tap into the subtle signs—how his rhythm builds, how he follows, when his senses lock onto a target—this colt can outkick expectations. But the moment you rush him, or ask him to make a decision on his own in the heat of battle, the mental structure begins to crumble. He’s a performance vase: strong and elegant, but fragile if mishandled.

---

### **Intuition Call:**

Feels like a colt who could fire if allowed to run invisibly through the first half of the race. If he finds his “shadow horse” to track and the timing is right, he may hit the stretch with a slingshot of emotional clarity. But if the environment feels loud, cluttered, or confusing—he may run in a fog, never quite switching on.



# HILL ROAD

*Trainer: Chad Brown*

*Sire/Dam: Quality Road o/o Exotic Notion*

## 🧠 Between The Ears

Hill Road is a mentally evolving colt still shaping the clay of his competitive identity. He carries a strong Individual Herd Dynamic (IHD) that initially drives him into the fray, but he's shown increasing signs of yielding to a developing Group Herd Dynamic (GHD) that tempers and distributes his emotional energy more efficiently. This tug-of-war is part of his growth arc, which has given him a unique dual gear—initial spark followed by a thoughtful, measured pace. He feels his way into races with a deliberate efficiency, and when his mind-to-body fluency is in sync, he drinks in the environment and flows through space with economy and purpose.

He's shown a commendable spatial interpretive ability, often clearing space with a 3:1 efficiency ratio—an important marker for Psychological Pace Index potential. But this isn't fully polished yet. In moments of high-intensity stretch pressure, like in the Tampa Bay Derby, Hill Road's rhythm faltered. As the competition surged, his sensory processing—particularly on the oblique right—fell a beat behind, causing a misfire in mental/sensory timing and cost him momentum. He gave the impression of trying to charge forward while psychologically stuck between gears.

In the Peter Pan, blinkers were introduced—and with them came a new complication. While his physical forward motion remained forceful, the visual restriction appeared to rob him of environmental feel. His movement resembled a boat with a rudder barely in the water—physically pressing but directionally unsettled. He won the race, but not in combat-ready self-awareness. With blinkers on, sensory lead changes become blind spots, not adjustments. And that may prove costly if there is a continued adjustment period against seasoned rivals in the Belmont Stakes who possess both control of themselves and their surroundings. He may yet need to outrun not just his competitors—but himself.

## 🧠 Strengths:

- Building dual gear GHD-to-IHD transition capability
- Strong mind-to-body fluency when in sync
- Efficient sensory lead changes when unencumbered

## ⚔️ Vulnerabilities:

- Prone to sensory delays at high speeds or under closing pressure
- Blinkers reduce his ability to clear space, creating blind decision zones, shrinking his mental workspace

### **Ride Style Tip:**

Forward and aggressive with environmental awareness. Needs a jockey who rides with conviction over finesse.

---

### **Best Asset:**

Competitive duration potential fueled by growing emotional maturity and efficient spatial interpretation. \*Hopefully for him, if the blinkers stay in, that he adapts more quickly than not.\*

---

### **Achilles Heel:**

Loss of mental rhythm under pressure—especially when vision is restricted. Sensory cadence can fall behind physical pace.

---

### **Watch Factor:**

Watch for head carriage (floating) and rhythm at the top of the stretch—erratic movement signals disconnect. If running with blinkers, pay close attention to his ability (or inability) to pivot and re-engage when asked, the Jockey may well need to be his sensory guardrails to keep him on the road.

---

### **Race Condition Flag:**

Equipment-sensitive — Blinkers impact awareness and rhythm.

---

### **Performance Projection:**

 Potential Upset

---

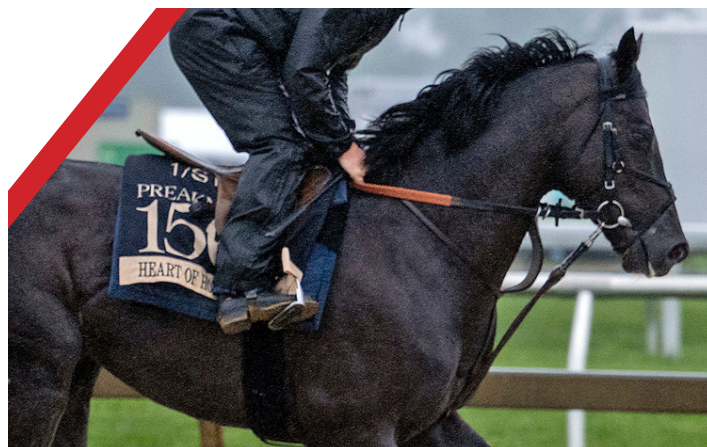
### **Kerry's Note:**

There's a raw beauty in Hill Road's process—he's like a colt building his own architecture mid-race. If the flow ahead unfolds at the right cadence, he can stay locked in and deliver a stretch run full of purpose. But if needing to act too soon, or if his sensory field is too limited, the mental infrastructure may collapse before completion. This is a horse who needs rhythm and timing to run his race.

---

### **Intuition Call:**

Feels like a horse that could step forward on the big stage if the blinkers come off and he's given something to chase. Not a finesse player—he's a runner who needs rhythm and reason to stay in the game. If blinkers stay on, he will need a strong guiding hand from the saddle to stay on target under prolonged combat stresses. I like the horse, I would like to see his herd dynamic growth developed with patience over equipment for the long game benefits.



# HEART OF HONOR

*Trainer: Jamie Osborne*

*Sire/Dam: Honor A.P. o/o Ruby Love*

## 🧠 Between The Ears

There is a restless nobility in Heart Of Honor—a sense of untapped might flickering behind a veil of uncertainty. This is a colt with presence, but that presence doesn't yet know what shape it wants to take. Watching him is like watching a mind argue with itself: one side filled with willingness, the other lost in translation. His body wants to run, but his mind stalls at the starting line, tangled in a sensory net it can't quite shake free from. Whether it's the blinkers, the new environments, or the cumulative effects of early separation from maternal influence, there's a consistent emotional static that keeps him from fully syncing with himself.

In the gate, he's not settled—he's searching. His countenance and overall expressions suggest he's trying to make sense of what's happening to him rather than being mentally positioned to engage with what he's about to do. This delayed ignition results in an energy leak, both physical and psychological, that softens his launch and diminishes his emotional reserve tank before the race even properly unfolds. He doesn't lack effort or ability; he lacks the internal clarity and fluency needed to weaponize them at will.

What makes Heart Of Honor interesting is that, for all the internal dissonance, he still shows up—still tries. When the race shapes itself cleanly and chaos stays in the periphery, he has just enough cohesion to be in the frame. He's not a herd disrupter; he's a herd passenger. If allowed to travel quietly in the flow, occasionally he'll be close enough to matter without anyone even seeing him coming.

## 🧠 Strengths:

- Willing, athletic mover when given clear lanes.
- Can float under the radar in herd dynamic terms—often ignored by peers, allowing him to glide into contention when the race stays calm.

## ✓⚠️ Vulnerabilities:

- Struggles with internal sensory lead changes and outside pressure—gets tangled in his own processing delays.
- Emotional energy leaks early, which compromises staying power in a protracted pace scenario.



### **Ride Style Tip:**

“Steady hands, soft push.” Let him find his rhythm before asking—he needs a jockey who can guide the mind before asking for body response. Avoid sudden moves.

---

### **Best Asset:**

His physical talent. When his mind and body do link up, he glides beautifully and can carry pace with surprising efficiency—if he’s not disturbed emotionally.

---

### **Achilles Heel:**

- Mental noise: over-processing, under-resolving.
  - Blinker effect may be exacerbating the sensory imbalance instead of helping it.
  - Needs too many things to go “just right” in order to truly compete.
- 

### **Watch Factor:**

If you see him expressing himself “loudly” in the gate, it’s a sign his GHD is destabilizing. In the race, if his stride appears to be what I call climbing/choppy, he may be emotionally draining straightaway. Watch to see how long it takes him to look comfortable in the early stages, this will be telling of how much emotional energy he is leaking out.

---

### **Race Condition Flag:**

Traffic-sensitive. Blinkers combined with sensory search mode means he must have a clean, quiet trip to stay engaged. Inside post could be problematic. He really begs for a clear line of site from start to finish.

---

### **Performance Projection:**

💡 Overlay Potential — if he gets his trip, he can surprise in the lower exotics. But there’s a high chance he becomes a visual fade if the pace or pressure gets ragged.

---

### **Kerry’s Note:**

I wouldn’t be surprised to find more horse here than what has been so far seen from a herd dynamic point of view—especially if he’s given the opportunity to run first, establish his rhythm, and compete second. Racing without being asked to meet expectations until they become achievable goals is the best approach, even in his workouts IMO. There’s something tender in his emotional signature, something unfinished. That doesn’t mean he can’t run well—but he has to catch the moment on his terms.

---

### **Intuition Call:**

There’s a softness to his fight—not a lack of courage, but a fragility in the way it’s expressed. I feel like this is a horse still discovering himself, and though he might catch a piece if the stars align, I don’t feel like this is his race. He does feel like a colt suited for a smaller field, less chaos, and a little more time.

## **Kerry's Lexicon: Glossary of Frequently Used Terms**

Follow this link → <https://www.kerrymthomas.com/herd-dynamic-profiling/discover-more> for a curated list of key terms and definitions drawn from my over two decades of behavioral evaluation case studies. When you think differently, you see differently. This glossary is a key step towards understanding the psychological landscape of natural herd dynamics and for seeing horses from inside out, your window into the operating system running the machine.